

Pennsylvania - 12th District

## 12 John P. Murtha (D)

Of Johnstown — Elected 1974

**Born:** June 17, 1932, New Martinsville, W.Va.  
**Education:** U. of Pittsburgh, B.A. 1962.  
**Military Career:** Marine Corps, 1952-55, 1966-67.  
**Occupation:** Car wash operator.  
**Family:** Wife, Joyce Bell; three children.  
**Religion:** Roman Catholic.  
**Political Career:** Pa. House, 1969-74.  
**Capitol Office:** 2423 Rayburn Bldg. 20515; 225-2065.



In Washington: Murtha has built his reputation the way House members did in the old days — by making his deals in the back of the chamber and assiduously avoiding publicity.

A special favorite of Speaker O'Neill throughout his career, he might well have become majority whip in 1981 had it not been for a brush with the Abscam bribery affair the previous year. When the matter closed in 1981 without any charges being made against him, Murtha was on the way to restoring his old influence.

Murtha almost never speaks on the House floor, but he spends every afternoon there, and is one of the few members who will rarely leave to answer a reporter's question. When he is not plotting strategy with O'Neill or a leadership lieutenant, he is sitting in a remote corner of the chamber, talking politics with some of his "boys" — Pennsylvania's ethnic machine Democrats.

Unlike most states, Pennsylvania has perhaps half a dozen back-bench Democrats who are normally willing to do as they are told by a persuasive and influential home-state colleague. In an era when hardly any member controls even one vote beyond his own, Murtha is one of the last legitimate vote brokers left. On any close roll call, he is an important man to see.

He is also the man members can thank for most of their increased salary and benefits of recent years. In 1979 he lobbied for three months to pass a 5.5 percent pay raise through the Appropriations Committee and then through the House. On the roll call that finally passed it, 208-203, he patrolled the aisles like the Marine Corps officer he used to be, implying to nervous Democrats that their vote would be regarded as a test of their leadership loyalty, if not their manhood.

In 1981 he came up with another scheme

— an increase in the amount of money members could earn each year beyond their regular salaries. This one was a quickie. He brought up the measure on the House floor on the next to last day of the session, then muscled it through in 10 seconds without telling any potential opponents what his resolution was about.

Late the next year, when the House voted for a new pay raise of more than \$9,000, Murtha was again a strategist and an effective lobbyist in persuading wavering Democrats to support it.

Within the Appropriations Committee, Murtha is a crucial member of the Defense and Interior subcommittees.

On Defense, he takes a generally hawkish view against most of the cost-cutting initiatives of his subcommittee chairman, Joseph P. Addabbo of New York. But he is not ideologically predictable; he and Addabbo have been allies in working to drop funds for the B-1 bomber. Murtha considers the B-1 a less attractive option than upgrading the F-111 fighter plane.

He also was skeptical during most of 1982 about the "dense pack" basing system for the MX missile. But he ultimately decided to support it, opposing not only Addabbo but O'Neill and the Democratic leadership. Murtha said Harold Brown, former secretary of defense in the Carter administration, convinced him to support "dense pack." When the key vote came, Murtha was working closely with Republican Trent Lott of Mississippi, the minority whip.

Early in 1982, Murtha traveled to El Salvador on behalf of the Democratic leadership to observe that country's elections. He returned to tell O'Neill that the regime there had conducted "free and open" voting and was making progress in human rights and land redistribu-

John P. Murtha, D-Pa.

## Pennsylvania 12

Before 1982, Cambria and Westmoreland counties each controlled a separate district. Now, Murtha has them both in his redrawn 12th.

Spread over the foothills of the Allegheny Mountains, Westmoreland and Cambria are similar in demographics and voting habits — and both are plagued by high unemployment. Their ethnic industrial towns, many of them 95-to-98 percent white, sit in the hollows between the hills, often dependent on one local industry. In Westmoreland County, New Stanton has a Volkswagen assembly plant. Latrobe fabricates steel; Jeannette makes steam turbines. In Cambria County, Leechburg rolls steel, Crenshaw blows glass containers and Cherry Tree holds a rail yard.

Johnstown, the biggest city in the new 12th, exemplifies the hard times felt throughout this blue-collar district. Its central business district has withered and its plants have laid off hundreds of workers. A flood, the third in the past century — though not as serious as the first two — devastated the old city in 1977.

## Southwest — Johnstown

Cambria and Westmoreland show no markable parallels in voting. In the 1976 presidential election, Westmoreland went for Jimmy Carter with 54.5 percent of the vote and Cambria with 53.8 percent. Four years later, as disaffection with the Democratic president grew, Carter won Westmoreland with 49 percent and Cambria with 50.1.

Both counties also have political histories heavy on intrigue and venality. John Torquato ran the Cambria Democratic organization until his 1978 conviction on corruption charges. At the same time, the law caught up with Egidio "Gene" Cerilli, the Westmoreland Democratic Party chairman. Both men were convicted on charges of extorting payments from highway construction firms in their respective counties.

Population: 515,915. White 507,805 (98%), Black 5,918 (1%). Spanish origin 1,965 (0.4%). 18 and over 374,878 (73%), 65 and over 64,054 (12%). Median age: 32.

tion. He said extensive American military help would not be needed.

As the first Vietnam veteran elected to Congress, he also has worked for higher benefits for those who served in Vietnam. "I saw their tragedy and suffering," he once said, while members of Congress were "in their air-conditioned offices telling these soldiers what to do."

On the Interior Subcommittee, Murtha continually promotes the interests of coal, defending both those who mine it and those who own the mines. On these issues he works closely with Joseph M. McDade, the Republican from Scranton, on the eastern side of his state. McDade is the dominant member of the subcommittee; when the two men work together to obtain something, such as federal money for a coal gasification plant, they usually get it.

For a time during the 97th Congress, it appeared that Murtha's influence would be permanently limited by his involvement in Abcam.

He was never charged with a crime in the FBI bribery scandal, and he was able to issue a statement in mid-1980 reporting that he had

been cleared. But his initial identification as one of those involved in the case hurt his public reputation, and his decision later in the year to testify against two other members raised questions about him in the minds of colleagues.

In February of 1980, Murtha was reported to be one of the targets of the FBI undercover agents who posed as Arab sheiks and offered members of Congress \$50,000 to help them get into the United States. Videotapes of the FBI sessions clearly show that Murtha turned down the money. "I'm not interested," he said at one point. "I'm sorry." He explained that he was on the House ethics committee and told the "sheiks" that "if you get into heat with politicians, there's no amount of money that can help."

Murtha said he only participated in the meeting to seek investments by the Arabs in coal mining operations, banks and other businesses in his district. He said pursuing such investments is a normal duty of a conscientious member of Congress, especially one representing an economically depressed area.

The tapes do, however, show Murtha discussing money for Reps. Frank Thompson, D-

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N.J., and John Murphy, D-N.Y. "Let me make it very clear, the other two guys expect to be taken care of," Murtha said at one point.

"I broke no law," he explained later. "I took no money. I was pursuing a policy of trying to attract industry to the district."

In July 1981, after one Abscam defendant had been expelled from Congress, two had resigned and four had been defeated for reelection, Murtha was cleared by the House ethics committee, on which he had served until 1980. The panel said it "found on the basis of the evidence presented no reason to issue a statement of alleged violation."

The committee's special counsel in the case, E. Barrett Prettyman Jr., resigned following the decision not to accept his recommendation of further proceedings against Murtha. But the case was not reopened, and Murtha's career in the House was secure.

**At Home:** When longtime Republican Rep. John P. Saylor died in 1973, the Cambria County (Johnstown) Democratic organization seized its chance to recapture a nominally Democratic district. They found an attractive candidate in Murtha, a personable state legislator who had won a Bronze Star and two Purple Hearts as a Marine in Vietnam.

Murtha won narrowly over Harry M. Fox, a former Saylor aide, in a 1974 special election focused on the Republican Party's Watergate problems. He easily dispatched Fox the following November and has won easily since.

That includes 1980, when Abscam had become public. Murtha's opponent tried to make the bribery scandal an issue, but he did not succeed. Murtha's plurality was down, but he still drew 59 percent of the vote.

In 1982, however, Pennsylvania's Republican-controlled Legislature combined Murtha's district with that of fellow-Democrat Don Bailey. The primary paired two excellent campaigners and close friends with similar pro-labor views.

The merged district contained about the same number of former constituents of each candidate. It was essentially a battle between two organizations: Murtha had the one in his home, Cambria County, and Bailey had the one in his native Westmoreland County. Bailey refused suggestions that he bring up Abscam or a second Murtha liability — his sponsorship of congressional tax breaks and salary increases.

While both Democrats worked hard, Murtha fielded a superior get-out-the-vote operation. In addition, Murtha convinced voters that he could better help the economically depressed steel district through his greater seniority and influence with the House leadership.

Bailey later toyed with GOP leaders' suggestion that he replace their candidate in the general election, but eventually declined. That left a little-known Republican challenger, who did bring up Abscam but found few voters interested in hearing about it.

**John P. Murtha, D-Pa.****Committees**Appropriations (14th of 36 Democrats)  
Defense; Interior; Legislative.**Elections**

**1982 General**  
 John P. Murtha (D) 96,369 (61%)  
 William Tuscano (R) 54,212 (35%)

**1982 Primary**  
 John P. Murtha (D) 31,945 (52%)  
 Don Bailey (D) 23,685 (38%)  
 David McWherter (D) 3,393 ( 6%)

**1980 General**  
 John P. Murtha (D) 106,750 (59%)  
 Charles Getty (R) 72,999 (41%)

**Previous Winning Percentages:** 1978 (69%) 1976 (68%)  
 1974 (58%) 1974\* (49%)

\* Special election

**District Vote For President**

1980		1976	
D	87,100 (46%)	D	94,428 (51%)
R	94,584 (49%)	R	88,982 (48%)
I	7,535 ( 4%)		

**Campaign Finance**

	Receipts	Receipts from PACs	Expenditures
<b>1982</b>			
Murtha (D)	\$272,918	\$142,175 (52%)	\$245,716
Tuscano (R)	\$32,689	\$250 ( .7%)	\$24,240
<b>1980</b>			
Murtha (D)	\$112,350	\$54,350 (48%)	\$116,386
Getty (R)	\$17,675	\$200 ( 1%)	\$17,675

**Voting Studies**

Year	Presidential Support		Party Unity		Conservative Coalition	
	S	O	S	O	S	O
1982	53	39	68	21	64	36
1981	45	50	70	27	64	36
1980	74	21	78	19	49	48
1979	72	28	74	24	57	39
1978	59	40	66	33	55	45
1977	66	29	61	28	54	38
1976	37	61	65	32	56	41
1975	42	49	60	32	55	39
1974 (Ford)	44	52				
1974	54	46†	67	32†	52	47†

S = Support O = Opposition

† Not eligible for all recorded votes.

**Key Votes**

Reagan budget proposal (1981) N  
 Legal services reauthorization (1981) Y  
 Disapprove sale of AWACs planes to Saudi Arabia (1981) Y  
 Index income taxes (1981) N  
 Subsidize home mortgage rates (1982) Y  
 Amend Constitution to require balanced budget (1982) N  
 Delete MX funding (1982) N  
 Retain existing cap on congressional salaries (1982) N  
 Adopt nuclear freeze (1983) Y

**Interest Group Ratings**

Year	ADA	ACA	AFL-CIO	CCUS
1982	45	43	90	33
1981	45	29	80	22
1980	44	21	78	65
1979	37	8	79	47
1978	25	30	65	33
1977	20	27	86	31
1976	45	36	91	25
1975	42	48	95	36
1974	26	29	100	30